



The President's Daily Brief

20 April 1973

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

20 April 1973

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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In Cambodia, Republican Party leader Sirik Matak has rejected Lon Nol's proposal for an advisory political council and has proposed instead the creation of a four-member group, including himself and the President, that would have full power. (Page 2)

The return of the 312th Division headquarters to southern North Vietnam appears to be part of a major restructuring of Communist forces in northernmost South Vietnam. (Page 3)

Most members of the North Atlantic Council find Moscow's proposal to end the impasse over Hungarian participation in the MBFR preparatory talks far from ideal, but they are willing to accept it as the best compromise obtainable at this time. (Page 4)

Reports circulating in the Moscow diplomatic community indicate that the Party Central Committee will meet soon, perhaps next week, to discuss foreign policy or modernization of the economy. (Page 5)

Pakistan regards the recent India-Bangladesh proposal as a basis for discussion and probably will reply today. (Page 6)

Philippine President Marcos' announcement that he wants to renegotiate all aspects of US-Philippine relations seems to be part of an attempt to link Philippine foreign and domestic concerns. (Page 7)

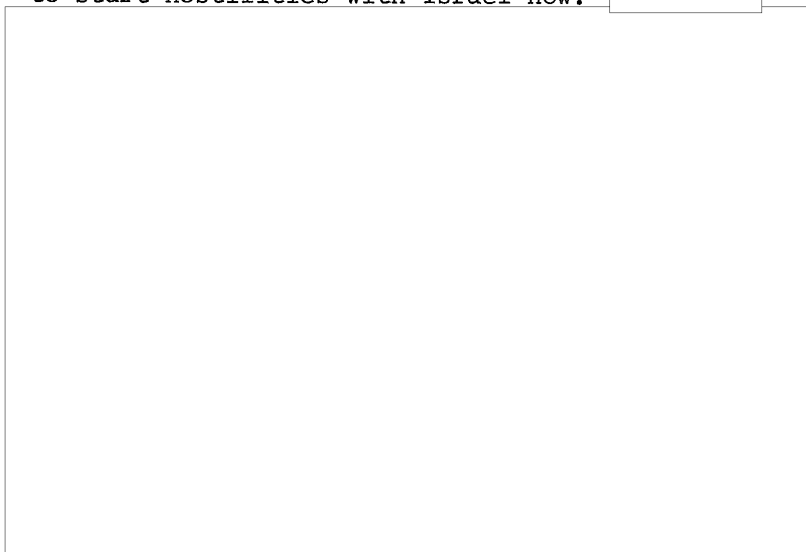
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EGYPT

Cairo has taken a number of steps recently to increase its military preparedness. These activities, however, do not indicate an intention to start hostilities with Israel now. [REDACTED]

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Egypt is still ready to negotiate, but there is increasing evidence that President Sadat believes that, in the end, only military action will generate movement toward a settlement. If Egypt does resort to military action, its most likely initial course would be small-scale raids across the canal combined with air raids on Israeli forces in the Sinai. These would trigger a massive Israeli response.

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CAMBODIA

During a lengthy, frank session with Lon Nol on April 18, Republican Party leader Sirik Matak rejected the President's proposal for an advisory political council. Matak proposed instead the creation of a four-member group that would have full power. Authority would be divided equally among the members--Lon Nol, Matak, former chief of state Cheng Heng, and former first deputy prime minister In Tam. Matak and In Tam, who was also at the meeting, told the President that the pro-government legislature would have to be dissolved and new elections held with all political groups given a chance to compete.

Lon Nol said he had no absolute objections to the new proposals, but that he needed more time to consider them; he promised a reply within 24 hours. After the meeting, Matak admitted that in view of Lon Nol's tendency to procrastinate, he might accept some additional delay. Matak added, however, that neither he nor In Tam would retreat from their latest proposals, which Matak believes stand a slightly better than even chance of being accepted by the President.

Matak evidently pulled no punches during the meeting, and claims that he criticized the President for his excessive optimism and inept leadership. Lon Nol listened to these accusations in unhappy silence, according to Matak.

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VIETNAM

Radio direction-finding of April 17 places North Vietnam's 312th Division headquarters west of Vinh in southern North Vietnam.

Divisional headquarters was last located in late March just north of the Demilitarized Zone. Location of the division's three regiments is not known, but they probably are following the headquarters north.

The return of the 312th Division headquarters to southern North Vietnam appears to be part of a major restructuring of Communist forces in northernmost South Vietnam. Three divisions and a number of independent regiments are involved in the realignment. The 308th Division left Quang Tri in January and is now near Hanoi; the 304th Division apparently sent some units north sometime after late January; and the 312th Division started withdrawing in late March. Intercepted messages also indicate that at least two antiaircraft artillery regiments have left Quang Tri in recent weeks and are moving south through the Laos panhandle.

The evidence suggests that Hanoi viewed its force structure in Quang Tri as excessive. The returning divisions are among Hanoi's best. They carried the brunt of the fighting in Quang Tri Province last year. The remaining force structure is comparable to that in place in Quang Tri when Hanoi launched its 1972 Easter offensive.

The Communists probably view their existing force structure as adequate for defending the area, conducting limited operations, and forcing Saigon to keep its airborne and marine divisions committed in Quang Tri.

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MBFR

Most members of the North Atlantic Council find Moscow's proposal to end the impasse over Hungarian participation in the MBFR preparatory talks far from ideal, but they are willing to accept it as the best compromise obtainable at this time.

The Soviet proposal lists Hungary as one of eight "special participants," but it also provides for unilateral statements by the two sides to make explicit their disagreement on Hungary's status.

The British object to the proposal but may decide eventually to go along with other NAC members. They believe that listing Hungary as a special participant would represent a fait accompli which the unilateral statements would not modify. They think it could prevent discussion of the application of eventual MBFR agreements to Hungary. Bonn supports the Soviet proposal, but the Germans too have emphasized that MBFR talks must deal with force levels in Hungary.

Unless the British request it, the Council will not meet again to discuss the proposal. If London decides to accept the Soviet plan, Council approval could be given without an additional meeting.

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USSR

Reports circulating in the Moscow diplomatic community indicate that the Party Central Committee will meet soon, perhaps next week, to discuss foreign policy or modernization of the economy.

Circumstances would seem to call for a Central Committee review of both subjects in the near future. At the least, Party chief Brezhnev will want Central Committee endorsement of his travels to Bonn next month and to Washington later this year. Detente policy has caused controversy in the past and Brezhnev wants to have solid backing before he goes.

A year ago, Brezhnev promised that the Central Committee would take up the question of how to accelerate scientific and technical progress. Now perhaps he wants to examine the place of science and technology in the economy and to define how expanded relations with the developed West can be used to cut down industrial deficiencies.

The question of technological progress is not likely to stir controversy. It masks, however, an issue that will be on the minds of the Central Committee members, but which Brezhnev will strive to keep from coming to debate. Earlier this month, plans were announced--apparently without prior consultations with the Central Committee--for an extensive reorganization of Soviet industry. Details will not be released for six months. Brezhnev will have to cope with unease among Central Committee members who are worried about how the sweeping reorganization will affect their constituencies.

Brezhnev's political position is strong. Nevertheless, the Party Politburo still has a number of members who probably carry grudges against Brezhnev. This raises another possibility, that Brezhnev may move against his enemies, just as he demoted Shelest at a Central Committee meeting preceding President Nixon's visit to Moscow.

In fact, Shelest may again be a target. Recently he was harshly criticized by name for ideological errors. Such criticism of Politburo members is unprecedented.

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PAKISTAN-INDIA-BANGLADESH

Pakistan regards the recent India-Bangladesh proposal as a basis for discussion and probably will reply today.

Islamabad is particularly relieved at the abandonment of the demand that it recognize Dacca as a condition for the return of Pakistani war prisoners.

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India and Bangladesh had proposed that

--195 Pakistani POWs be tried for war crimes in Bangladesh but that all the other 90,000 POWs be repatriated.

--Several hundred thousand Bengalis be allowed to leave Pakistan.

--Islamabad accept about 250,000 Biharis who want to leave Bangladesh.

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PHILIPPINES

President Marcos told newsmen yesterday that he wants to renegotiate all aspects of Philippine relations with the US and suggested June as a target for beginning negotiations. Marcos wants the discussions to consider all treaties with the US at once--the base agreement, the mutual defense pact, the Laurel-Langley trade agreement, and a proposed extradition treaty.

This latest move seems to be part of a broader attempt to link Philippine foreign and domestic concerns. Marcos is increasingly concerned about the sluggish economy and he apparently is convinced more foreign aid and investment is imperative. Earlier this month he asked a committee of foreign policy experts to determine how foreign policy could serve as an "instrument of economic development."

Marcos may believe that by raising the issue of the US treaties, he can pressure Washington into providing more aid. In the past, he has also made public issue of the US-Philippine relationship in order to distract attention from domestic problems. This may again be in the back of Marcos' mind, in view of his inability thus far to effect reforms promised last September when he declared martial law.

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NOTES

Laos: Despite bellicose statements from Sam Neua on the bombing at Tha Viang, Lao Communist envoy Phoune Sipraseuth is continuing to meet twice daily with government negotiator Ngon Sananikone in Vientiane. Ngon says little progress is being made at these sessions. The Communists in effect have repudiated the tentative agreement on the division of cabinet portfolios by renewing their demands for a deputy prime ministership and the ministry of interior. Ngon believes that the private sessions will continue, but sees the prospects for any immediate progress as dim.

European Communities: EC agricultural ministers failed to agree this week on community prices for 1973-74. The EC Commission had proposed modest price rises for most products and a return to the common price system disrupted by the currency crises. The opposition of some of the ministers to these proposals was reinforced by demonstrations in northern France by some 30,000 French, German, Belgian, and Dutch farmers demanding larger price increases. The Council will meet again next week, but farmer protests will continue to make agreement difficult.

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